

FORCE INVESTIGATION TEAM FORCE REVIEW BOARD



SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
FORCE INVESTIGATIONS



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Path to Reform

- The 2011 investigation by the Department of Justice found deficiencies in SPD's **training, policies, and oversight** with regard to the use of force.
- In 2012, a Settlement Agreement (SA) was reached between the City of Seattle and Department of Justice. This agreement required extensive changes to SPD's **policies** on use of force and investigation of force. It also put in place new **oversight** requirements.
- Improving community relationships and trust are key goals of the Settlement Agreement.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Use of Force Reform

- SPD revised extensively its use of force policies, procedures, and training.
- Major revisions of policy on force reporting and investigation procedures were completed.
- Sworn employees at all levels received extensive training regarding force, and specific requirements of the new policies.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

De-Escalation

- Our policy now requires de-escalation when feasible:
“When Safe under the Totality of the Circumstances and Time and Circumstances Permit, Officers Shall Use De-Escalation Tactics in Order to Reduce the Need for Force”.
- Officers and supervisors have received specific training on the application of de-escalation techniques.
- De-Escalation tactics are integrated into mandatory ongoing in-service training.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Classification of Force

The revised SPD policy dictates different levels of investigation based on the seriousness of the force:

- **TYPE I (Sergeant):** Transient pain, disorientation, or aiming of firearm.
- **TYPE II (Sergeant):** Physical injury, complaint of injury, or less lethal force (Taser, OC spray, baton).
- **TYPE III (Force Investigation Team):** Serious injury, deadly force, loss of consciousness, criminal or serious officer misconduct, or impact weapon to the head.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Force Investigation Team (FIT)

- Created in January, 2014, as part of the implementation of the Settlement Agreement to investigate the most serious (Type III) Use of Force cases.
- Protocols were developed through a collaborative effort involving the Monitoring Team, Department of Justice, and the Seattle Police Department.
- Modeled after Los Angeles Police Department Force Investigations Division, and other national leaders in Force Investigation.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

FIT Members and Training

- The team is made up of very experienced detectives who received intense training specific to the investigation of use of force incidents.
- Integrity, thoroughness, and objectivity are basic requirements.
- Extensive continuing education required to stay current in evolving field.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

FIT's Expectations and Goals

- Complete comprehensive and objective investigations of SPD's most serious force incidents, with the utmost integrity and professionalism.
- Remain transparent throughout the course of the investigation.
- Be compassionate toward our community members and toward affected officers.
- Stay introspective and critical in our internal evaluations - always strive to improve our investigative process.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

FIT's Initial Investigation

- Team responds to scene and takes command.
- Collects and documents evidence at the scene, employing CSI's expertise in the most serious cases.
- Separate and take statements from officers, subjects, and witnesses.
- Canvass for witnesses and video evidence.
- Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) representatives actively monitor investigation.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

FIT Investigation – First Week

- Forensic testing through WSP crime lab
- Latent print analysis
- Attend autopsy and coordinate with Medical Examiner in cases involving death
- Coordinate release of information to the public for transparency, and solicit witnesses through media posts
- Follow-up interviews with witnesses
- Review video and audio evidence



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

FIT Investigation – Continuing

- Conduct additional follow-up interviews with officers and others if necessary
- Initiate and maintain contact with family
- Interview medical personnel involved (Fire Department, ambulance, and hospital)
- Inspect firearms (in shooting cases)
- Transcribe audio-recorded statements from officers, witnesses, and the subject of the force
- Assemble investigative case file
- Community outreach



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

FIT Investigation – Conclusion

- Receive final lab reports, evidence analysis documents, autopsy report (in death cases), medical records, and CSI investigative report.
- Complete thorough and detailed case summary, including outlines of video and audio evidence.
- Assemble complete digital investigative case file, which may exceed 300 GB of documents and data.
- Detective submits case for review. Investigation is usually finalized within 90 days in shooting cases and 30 days in non-shooting cases.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

FIT Investigation – Reviews

Once the FIT detective completes their case, it is reviewed by the FIT Sergeant and Commander. These are very critical reviews, and items are always identified which need to be addressed to complete the investigation.

FIT then makes the entire investigative file available for review by:

- OPA
- The Monitoring Team
- Department of Justice
- The involved officer's Captain



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Accountability and Oversight

OPA oversight of the FIT investigation

- Serious misconduct identified is referred to OPA for investigation and disposition.
- OPA monitors the entire FIT investigative process and reviews the completed investigation for objectivity and thoroughness.

Training Unit Assessment

- The training unit evaluates the incident to determine whether the officer(s) actions were consistent with training.

The Monitor and DOJ review FIT's investigations.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Force Review Board

- The Force Review Board was also created as part of the Settlement Agreement.
- Each completed FIT investigation, including Officer Involved Shootings, is presented to the Force Review Board for a thorough analysis.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Force Review Board

Each case is rigorously dissected and evaluated by the Board

- Constitutional standard of “Objective Reasonableness” applied to the use of force.
- Determination made whether or not force was consistent with department policy.
- Lessons learned and points for take away are identified.
- Constant evaluation and discussion related to improvement of procedures, tactics, training, policies, and equipment.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Force Review Board Makeup

The FRB provides oversight of force investigations. Accountability is built in to the FRB, as attendees and participants include the following:

- Monitoring Team
- DOJ Attorney
- OPA Director
- Specially trained SPD Sergeants and Lieutenants serving as board members
- SPD Training Section and Policy Sergeants
- Civilian Observer, appointed by the Mayor (for shooting cases)
- Union Representative (for shooting cases)



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Transparency

- Accurate information is dispersed in a timely manner. Information is released via:
 - Media
 - SPD Blotter
 - Twitter
- FIT investigations provide the most complete work product with meticulous internal review
- King County District Court inquest is held in fatal incidents
- SPD's investigative and review process is one the community can trust will bring every fact of an incident to light



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

How are we doing?

- “FIT Investigations are consistently excellent”
 - [Seattle Police Monitor’s Assessment 9/15](#)
- “The review finds SPD’s FRB functioning well and, in a great majority of instances, as the Department’s hub of internal accountability, analysis, and continual improvement with respect to force.”
 - [Seattle Police Monitor’s Assessment 11/15](#)
- Many departments across the nation have come, and are coming, to Seattle to learn SPD’s strategies for use of force investigation, review, and training.



FORCE INVESTIGATIONS

Monitor's Force Assessment 9/15

“Rank and file officers have responded to clear rules of the road for systematically documenting force whenever it is used, sergeants have responded to the scene in a way that permits a thorough investigation, and FIT investigations are consistently excellent.”

- Policies - Revised
- Training – Completed and Ongoing
- Oversight – FRB, OPA, Monitor, DOJ